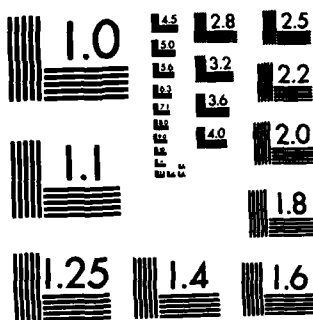


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THE WAR IN THE WESTERN SAHARA

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL MOHAMED AZDAD
INTERNATIONAL FELLOW

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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This paper is an excellent account of the War in the Western Sahara. After an extensive accounting of the history of Morocco, the author develops the recent issues surrounding the ongoing conflict between Morocco and Algeria. The author outlines Boumedienne's strategic goals and his unavowed objectives. He posits that Morocco enjoys a most significant geostrategic position at the crossroad of two continents and two water bodies and is in fact considered to be the stumbling block in Moscow's strategy of encirclement of Europe from the south. The author concludes with recommendations for both military & political (cont'd)		

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

THE WAR IN THE WESTERN SAHARA
INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

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8 May 1984

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The closest African state to Europe, Morocco, is one of the world's oldest nations. Its history as a standing political entity goes back as far as the 7th century. The abundance of its natural resources and its strategic location at the cross road of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, just south of the Strait of Gibraltar, a stone's throw away from Spain, caused Morocco to become very early the focal point of the greedy appetite of European colonial expansion.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the British and the Germans were legion in Morocco, the former pursuing economic and strategic objectives mainly related to the defense of the straits and the British naval base of Gibraltar, the latter actively engaged in the exploitation of copper, silver and gold mines.

In 1830 France landed in Algeria and very soon realized that the conquest of Algerian territory could not be substantial unless it were coupled with that of Morocco. Thus, pretexting that Morocco was actively supporting the Algerian leader Abdelkader, France bombarded the ports of Mogador (Essaouira) and Tangier in 1844. The outcome of the battle of Isly the same year, gave France ground for subsequent bolder moves. Fearing that France would outrace her, Spain fought her way in and landed at Sidi Jfni and the Atlantic Sahara in 1860 and 1884, respectively.

Germany, Great Britain and Italy stood in turn--for different reasons and invariably the same personal goal--for Morocco's territorial integrity. Eventually, the United States and the European powers, to include France, confirmed Morocco's independence at the Conference of Madrid in 1880,

convened by Great Britain and Spain, who feared that France might press claims to a large sphere of influence in Morocco.

Ultimately, the signing of the treaty of 30 March 1912 establishing the protectorate, was due less to the superiority of the French and Spanish Armies than to the feud that existed between some tribes on one hand and their opposition ^{to} the central government on the other hand. Thus the invaders took advantage of the situation and played off the major actors against one another. Some sinister characters like Raissuli and Buhmara played a very negative role in that their irresponsible conduct helped colonial penetration.

Between 1830 and 1880, Great Britain was--for her own reasons--firm in her commitment to stand for Morocco's independence. But the diplomatic waltz of the West European states between 1880 and 1901 and the stakes involved made her renounce her position. After 1880, every West European state watched closely over, and at times, even played an active role in Moroccan affairs. All, however, pledged to guarantee Morocco's independence.

The first decade of the 20th century proved, however, to be decisive. In 1901, France and Italy secretly agreed to allow each other a free hand in Morocco and Libya respectively. The substance of the Entente Cordiale between France and Great Britain signed in 1904 and directed against Germany, was that France would support British influence in Egypt if Britain did not jeopardize France's design over Morocco. In the same year, France and Spain agreed on the partition of Morocco in case of a French take over.

The Moroccan crises of 1905 and that of 1911 resulted in the firm intervention of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. Without consulting Germany, France presented to the Sultan proposals for some reforms to be carried

out under France's patronage. Furious, Wilhelm II sailed to Tangier where he publicly proclaimed to guarantee Moroccan independence and territorial integrity. The Moroccan monarch, His Majesty, King Moulay Abdelaziz, rejected the French proposals. Consequently, the Conference of Algiers was convened in 1906 in the Spanish city of Algeciras. It was attended by all West European powers, the United States and Morocco. All the participants reiterated their willingness to preserve Morocco's independence. Sticking, however, to her commitments under the Entente Cordiale, Britain weakened the German position and shifted the balance in favor of France who was confirmed in her position as Morocco's protector.

The murder of a French citizen in Marrakech gave France the pretext to occupy Oujda in 1907. On similar grounds, Casablanca and Rabat were occupied after bloody fighting. The Germans retaliated by dispatching the gunboat, Panther, to Agadir. This however did little to prevent the establishment of the French protectorate which was to be signed in Fes on 30 March 1912. The French Spanish Treaty of November 1912 established the Spanish protectorate over the northern zone of Morocco and over the Tarfia strip.

THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE PRIOR TO 1956 THE FRENCH SIDE OF THE COIN

The struggle for independence which began right after the signature of the Treaty of Fes comprises three distinct periods:

1. The armed resistance of the people between 1912 and 1934 against the military occupation of Moroccan territory. In fact, the tribes of the Rif, the Miable and Anly Allas, those of the Draa and Sous as well

as those of the Sahara were to be pacified only in 1934 after 22 years of unfaltering determination and valiant resistance.

2. The revolt of the Rif under the leadership of Abdelkrim who proved to be one of the military geniuses of his time constituted for both France and Spain one of the grimmest periods in their military history.¹ Abdelkrim, Cadi (judge) of Mellila not only successfully united the Rif tribes and put an end to Raissuli's banditism but also crippled the Spanish Army in the northern zone. In 1925 Spain planned a large scale operation in which 70,000 soldiers were to be deployed in a major offensive against Abdelkrim. The Spanish Army trapped at Anual lost 20,000 killed in action. Thus Abdelkrim not only defeated the enemy but also took more rifles, cannons and equipment than his troops could ever use. After Anual, Abdelkrim headed south, overran the French positions and came within 20 miles of the city of Fes. The war of the Rif lasted 6 years and required a standing Army of 400,000 French and Spanish soldiers supported by over 500 aircraft, tanks and a large scale Spanish amphibious landing on the day of Al Hoceimas on the Mediterranean. Eventually, Abdelkrim surrendered to the French in 1926 and was sent to exile on the island of Reunion.

3. The revolution of the King and the People which began to gather speed in the early 1940's. Immediately after the end of World War II in which hundreds of thousands of Moroccans participated on the allies' side, the French Resident General, backed by French interest groups, refused to consider the demands for reforms made by His Majesty, King Mohamed V, and the nationalists. The split in opinion between the King and the Resident General and the hostility of the Moroccan community towards the French presence brought the situation to a seething point.

In 1946, the reforms proposed by the Resident General were rejected by both the King and the Nationalists who would not by then accept anything short of independence. Backing the Nationalists, His Majesty, King Mohamed V, refused to sign the edicts that would have validated the reforms. The tension thus grew rapidly to a climax.

In the spring of 1947, the King made a trip to Tangier. This trip was significant in that the protecting powers were strongly opposed to the King's official visit to the city. The riots which broke in Casablanca during the Sultan's visit to Tangier brought the French/Moroccan relations beyond the intolerable. Deeply moved and exasperated by the brutality by which the French police handled the demonstrators, the King reacted courageously. His historical speech delivered on Radio Tangier on 10 April 1947, His Majesty, King Mohamed V called for national unity and independence, omitting purposefully to make reference to the French-Moroccan friendship.

After the King's speech in Tangier, France, under the pressure of the most radical colons, appointed General Alphonse Juin to the office of Resident General. In his efforts to undermine the King's authority, Juin very soon brought the relations between Morocco and France to a boiling point. Between 1947 and 1951, the French tried repeatedly and undisguisedly to force the King to sign away his authority. With unflinching courage and determination, the King refused to sign the proposed measures which would have diminished his power immensely. After 1950, the nationalists refused even to sit on the council of government.

In January 1951, the King, under tremendous pressure, signed the edicts but made it clear that he considered them not to be valid. The population, furious and outraged by the inconsiderate way the French

treated the King, staged the massive demonstrations of Casablanca in December 1951 during which the death toll reached 450.

In August 1953, the Resident General repeated the scenario of 1951 with the aim not to force the King to sign new edicts but simply to overthrow him. As was expected, His Majesty, King Mohamed V, refused to sign the proposed measures to the satisfaction of the Resident General, who immediately deposed him, arrested him and his family and sent them into exile on the island of Madagascar on 20 August 1953.

This date signaled the start of general hostilities against French authorities and French interests in Morocco. The deposition of the King infuriated every Moroccan, regardless of social status, ethnic and political background. In 1955, the National Liberation Army (NLA), numbering several thousands, openly engaged the French Army in large scale battles. Between 1953 and 1955, during the King's exile more than 7,000 hostile acts were committed against French authorities and interests and about 800 people were killed.

In October 1955, the French National Assembly voted the Moroccan independence with interdependence. On 31 October His Majesty, King Mohamed V, was received in full honor in Paris. He, of course, rejected outright the French idea of interdependence. However, he pressed the French for full independence to which they eventually agreed by the Treaty of Paris, signed by both parties on 2 March 1956.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE RECOVERY OF MOROCCAN TERRITORIES AFTER 1956

The Spanish Side of the Story--1956-1975

In 1956, Morocco put an end to the French and Spanish protectorates. The French zone and the Spanish zones were recovered in March and April

1956 respectively. Six months later, rid of its international status, Tangiers joined the motherland. The Moroccan people, its King and its political leaders considered the French and Spanish withdrawal from the central and northern parts of Morocco, only as a step on the long and rough road to total independence since Spain refused to depart from the presidios of Mellila and Centa, the islands Penu d'El Hoceimas and Shaffarines, Sidi Tfni enclave and the western Sahara. On the other hand, Morocco was at variance with France over the provinces of Touat, Tidikit and Tindouf which were carved away from the motherland and incorporated by the French in the Algerian territory when they realized that it would not be long before Morocco started the struggle for, and gained, its independence. If, under the urging of the Algerian provisory government in exile, this issue was set aside to be settled later after Algeria's independence, the territories still under Spanish rule caused immediate and urgent concern. Accordingly, the Moroccan National Liberation Army (MNLA), which had fought in the north, shifted its main effort against Spanish troops in the Western Sahara, as early as 1956.

Between 1956 and 1957, the MNLA was the uncontested master of the Western Sahara, after the Spanish Army was driven out of the eastern and central regions and was forced to take refuge in the seaports of Elayun, Boujdour, Bakhla and Guera. In 1958, sensing the threat materialize against the province of Tindouf still under dispute, the French talked the Spanish into planning and conducting a vast joint operation against the Moroccan National Liberation Army (MNLA). Given the code name of "Ecouvillon" this joint operation required over 15,000 men, hundreds of tanks, guns, and aircraft and lasted several months. The MNLA was eventually driven out. Spain agreed however, the same year to retrocede

the Tarfia strip which lies between the parallel 27°40' and the Draa river.

THE WEST SAHARAN ISSUE BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS

On 7 April 1956 on the occasion of the retrocession of the northern zone, a joint declaration by the Spanish and Moroccan governments was published. It stated:

The government of Spain recognizes the independence of Morocco and reaffirms its willingness to respect the territorial integrity of the Cherifian Empire as provided for by the international treaties of Madrid and Algeiras of 1880 and 1906, respectively and is willing to consider all measures to render it effective.

Unfortunately, after the retrocession of the Tarfia strip in 1958, Spain expressed her reluctance to pull out of the occupied territories, as stated in the declaration of 7 April 1956. Spain's position was to become more rigid and less compromising, after phosphate rock was discovered in 1963 in the Bucraa area, 110 km southeast of El Ayun. After 1963, the Spanish government applied enormous pressure on the United Nations General Assembly which eventually adopted the resolution 2229 (XXI) of December 1966. This resolution separated the case of Sidi Jfni from the Western Sahara, and urged the two parties to initiate negotiations for the former and make arrangements for a referendum for the latter.²

The UNs previous resolutions 1514 (XV), and 1541 (XV) adopted on 14 and 15 December 1960 respectively state:

Principle IV. Prima facie, there is an obligation to transmit information in respect to a territory which is geographically separate and is distinct ethnically and culturally from the country administering it.

Principle V. Once it has been established that this Prima facie case of geographical, ethnic or cultural distinctness of a territory exists, other elements may then be brought into consideration. These additional elements may be inter alia of an administrative, political, judicial, economic or historical nature.

Principle VI. A non-self governing territory can be said to have reached a full measure of self government by:

- a) Emergence as a sovereign state.
- b) Free association with an independent state.
- c) Integration with an independent state.

The resolution 2625 (XX), adopted 24 October 1970, further clarifies the previous resolutions:

The right to self-determination does not apply to sovereign, independent states, to integral parts of their territories, or to a segment of an independent people or of a nation. Construed thus, the principle of self-determination would lead to the fragmentation, dissolution and dismemberment of sovereign states and stated members of the United Nations.

In this respect, the danger would be particularly great for the states with populations characterized by a diversity of races and languages.

Would France in that matter grant independence to Brittany and Corsica?

Would Spain grant independence to the Basque country? If so, what would become of the Soviet Union, Iran, Yugoslavia, to name but a few?

When a member state is admitted to the United Nations, there is the implied acceptance by the entire community of the principle of territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of the particular state.³

If this is the general disposition of the principle of self-determination as formulated in the resolution 2625 (XX), why should then such a principle be applied to a Moroccan province with which, as has been confirmed by the International Court of Justice, the Kings of Morocco have always had legal ties of allegiance?

Although convinced of the legality of the claims of Morocco and perhaps because of this conviction, Spain addressed in 1973 a note to the local assembly, stating that the Spanish government was prepared to grant the Western Sahara internal autonomy. The Spanish move was, however, more subtle than it really suggested. The real goal beyond the move was to create conditions prerequisite for maintaining the territory under Spanish domination.

Having recognized Spanish unavowed strategy, Morocco immediately started to amplify and intensify the diplomatic campaign which culminated in the resolution 3292 (XXIX). In this resolution, voted on 14 December 1974, the United Nations General Assembly decided to:

- I. Request the International Court of Justice without prejudice to the provisions of the General Assembly Resolution 1514(XV), to give an advisory opinion at its earliest convenience on the following questions:
 1. Was the Western Sahara at the time of colonization by Spain a Terra Nullius?
If the answer to this is in the negative,
 2. What were the legal ties between this territory and the Kingdom of Morocco and the Mauritanian entity?
- II. Call upon Spain in its capacity as the administering power in particular as well as Morocco and Mauritania as interested parties to submit to the International Court of Justice all such information and documents as may be needed to clarify these questions.
- III. Urge the administering power to postpone the referendum.

Moreover, the resolution 3292 referred to only two parties; Spain, the administering power, vis a vis whom the right of self-determination was to be exercised, and Morocco and Mauritania, the appealing party, on behalf of which the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) advisory opinion was sought.

On 16 October 1975, the ICJ replied by the negative to the first question, and recognized the existence at the time of colonization of legal ties of allegiance between the King of Morocco and certain tribes of the Western Sahara. Regarding Mauritania, the ICJ recognized the existence of rights relating to the land between the Mauritanian entity and the Western Sahara.

After the verdict of the court, His Majesty, King Hassan II, decided to organize and proceed with the Green March, an unprecedented event in the world's history bringing together 350,000 volunteers, men and women who, unarmed, were to cross on 6 November 1975, in a peaceful march, the artificial border that separated every Moroccan from his brothers in the Western Sahara. In addition to dozens of teams required for the support of such an unprecedented reassemblment, many delegations from friendly countries joined the marchers. A huge camp was set up near the village of Tarfia for over 355,000 people. This camp ranked, for about three weeks, as Morocco's sixth largest city, with all utilities to include running water, electricity, telephone and telex. Medical and dental care were provided. Fresh fruits, vegetables and meat were brought in daily, by road and by air. In short, it was a magnificent and gigantic undertaking, the magnitude, the significance and the bearing of which could be matched only by the sincerity and determination of the volunteers. These 350,000, out of which 35,000 were females, were chosen from 1,000,000 Moroccans who had registered in one single day, between 0800 and 1730.

All volunteered to leave their families and their homes, to bear the hardship and challenge, the uncertainty in order to be among the first to hug and embrace those of their brothers and sisters colonialism had kept away from them by means of unwanted and unwarranted boundaries.

Led by the Prime Minister in person, members of government, political leaders and high ranking officers, the march proceeded early on 6 November 1975 and before noon the artificial boundary was crossed.

The same day, the United Nations Security Council, in its resolution 380 (1975), called upon Morocco and all the parties concerned to cooperate fully with the Secretary General in the fulfillment of the mandate entrusted to him by the Security Council resolutions 377 (1975) and 379 (1975).

Following the Secretary General's appeal and pursuant to these resolutions, Morocco and Mauritania on one side and Spain on the other side signed the Madrid Agreement of 14 November 1975, providing for an interim tripartite administration, putting an end to the Spanish presence in the Western Sahara before 28 February 1976, and respecting the wishes of the local population to join the Mother Land as expressed through their popular assembly.⁴

THE ANTAGONISTS ORIENTATION

Morocco's View of the Problem

Morocco is a constitutional monarchy whose religion is Islam and language Arabic. The Kingdom has very close ties and shares a lot of commonalities with the Arab states of North Africa and the Middle East regarding ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious background. These ties have been tremendously strengthened by Islamic tradition during the first century following the advent of Islam.

Because of the vicissitudes of history, Morocco was compelled to sever these ties. The first isolation period coincided with the Turkish occupation of the Middle East and North Africa to exclude Morocco who was

able to stop the Turks at its eastern border. For over four centuries Morocco was quasi completely cut off from the Middle East. The Kingdom had in this time frame no commercial, economic, cultural, or diplomatic relations with the Arab world, and consequently turned all its attention to the south where a position of influence had been achieved in present day Mauritania, Senegal, Mali and Niger. The French protectorate was to extend this period by about 50 years, from 1912 to 1956. Morocco's position in the matter is best described by His Majesty, King Hassan II, "Morocco is like a tree which feeds through roots deeply implanted in the African soil and breathes through foliage which rustles in the air of Europe."

During the protectorate, French was taught as a first language in public schools, bringing up Moroccans progressively and increasingly in contact with Western culture and civilization. During World War I and World War II, hundreds of thousands of Moroccans fought along side with the Allies. Between 1942 and 1945 alone, over 300,000 Moroccans representing over 50% of all French ground forces fought the campaigns of North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France and Germany, sharing in the western way of life.

This is a short overview of the Moroccan position as a linking point between the Arab Islamic culture and the western traditions.

ALGERIA

Algeria does not have a long history as an independent nation. Present Algerian territory has been ruled over the centuries by Arab Califs from Baghdad, by the Turks from Istanbul and by the French from Paris.

Algeria gained its independence in 1962 after a six year bloody war from which the country eventually emerged devastated and broke.

The first Algerian President, Ahmed Ben Bella, was overthrown in 1965 by his then Defense Minister and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Houari Boumedienne. A graduate of Islamic Studies from the University of El Azhar, Cairo, a stern and uncompromising character, Boumedienne led Algeria to a hard core progressivist if not extremist kind of socialism. He jailed or forced into exile those of his companions of arms his predecessor had spared. Unable to forget the humiliation he suffered in his double capacity as Minister of Defense and Chief of Staff of the armed forces, when the Moroccan Army defeated the Algerian invaders during the border clashes of 1963 in the vicinity of Hassi Beida and Hassi Tinjoub, he very early began to plan for a rematch. Consequently, a steady flow of sophisticated Soviet equipment began to pour in and inundate Algerian ports as early as 1966. Migs 17, 18 and 21, 130mm and 152mm guns, T-55 tanks, BRDMs, anti-aircraft guns and missiles were the major equipments Algeria received. The Navy also had its share and not the most insignificant. Thousands of Algerian servicemen were and still are trained in the Soviet Union to man and maintain the equipment received and those still due.

While trying to play down and placate Moroccan concern about Algerian armament policy, Boumedienne infiltrated the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the nonaligned movement, where algerians worked their way to key positions. Concurrently, Boumedienne spared no effort to gain sympathy and friendship of as many African leaders as could be managed. His preference, however, went to those leaders whose votes and support could be secured for a reasonable price. Thence, it is easy to

understand that the smallest and poorest countries in Africa and elsewhere, were his main target.

In 1968, His Majesty, King Hassan II, initiated detente with Algeria. As a result, a 20 year treaty of friendship was signed in the Moroccan city of Tfrane in January 1969. At the summit meeting of Tpemcen of 27 May 1970, the two heads of state agreed to solve the border dispute. In this respect, a joint commission was set up and tasked with the mission of resolving the problem. In 1972, along with the settlement of the border dispute, Boumedienne agreed to the Moroccan participation in the joint exploitation of the iron ore of Gara Djebilet, southeast of Tindouf. The Algerian agreement to the Moroccan participation was based on the fact that the Soviet sponsored studies of the project strongly recommend that the iron ore be shipped through the Atlantic. Shipment through the Mediterranean would involve transportation costs that would dramatically reduce the profit margin. This seems to make a lot of sense, for the nearest Algerian port is about 1400 km away, whereas the nearest Moroccan port is only about 350 km from the exploitation sites.

BOUMEDIENNE'S STRATEGIC GOALS

After he took over in 1965, Boumedienne presented himself and in fact acted as the chief protector of guerilla movements worldwide. He, in fact, gave support and sanctuary to whoever decided to bear arms for whatever reason or cause. Thus, the St. George's and Aleti Hotels in Algiers became the home of worldwide insurgents, terrorists and freedom fighter movement's leaders, where for years, Savimbi, Netto Goukouni, Habri could rub shoulders with Carlos and Bader Meinhof. Representatives of the Basque movement, the IRA and the POLISARIO were not left out.

In 1974, Boumedienne was presented with the chance of his life: the opportunity for the revenge he had been seeking since 1963. The game was, he thought, simple and implied apparently no risks: Through a fake guerilla movement scrambled together the same year, challenge Morocco's claim to recover one of her spoliated provinces.

Boumedienne's Unavowed Objectives

Boumedienne did not care the least whether the Saharawi remained under Spanish rule or whether they joined Morocco or Mauritania. By challenging Morocco and Mauritania, he meant to pursue two objectives.

I. Present himself as the heroic defender of the widow and the orphan. It was good publicity to make believe and be perceived to be quite concerned about the future and well being of those who were defenseless against colonialism and tyranny. But we know, as all those who have good faith, that he was simply acting. Since he was so insisting that the Saharawi's be granted independence why did he oppose the Touaregs' self-determination? Would it be superfluous to note the the Touaregs, inhabitants of the Algerian Sahara, were separately represented in the French National Assembly? We also know that Boumedienne has never seriously tried to help the Palestinian people assert their rights for a homeland, despite the legitimacy of their claim.

II. The second objective, unavowed, relates to the Algerian mid-term and long term strategic interests in the area. It was the driving force behind Boumedienne's determination to go as far as possible without dragging Algeria into an open armed conflict with Morocco and has three implications:

A. Destabilize and eliminate Morocco who is perceived to be the main contender and the stumbling block in Algeria's hegemonic scheme.

Morocco, with her long history as a standing nation, her constitutional monarchy, her natural resources and her strategic position seemed to disturb and even stymie the progress of the left oriented socialist revolution imported to Algeria in 1962.

B. In the early 1970s, Boumedienne understood that Spain was about to be forced out of the Western Sahara. He also understood that if he could fool everybody he stood a good chance to fulfill his dream of having free access to the Atlantic Ocean. This meant a lot for him:

- Get the best share of the halientic resources of the Atlantic coast, one of the richest in the world.
- Get hold of the phosphate rocks Algeria badly needs for her deteriorating agriculture.
- Export Gara Jebiliet iron ore through the port of El Ayun and consequently eliminate Morocco from the joint exploitation agreed upon in 1972.

C. Assert Algeria's hegemony over the region by:

- Controlling or giving its Soviet backers the possibility to control the most active leg of the sea line of communication around the Cape Horn between Western Europe and the United States on the one hand and between Western Europe, the United States and the Gulf on the other hand.
- By augmenting Algeria's influence over the Sub-Sahara states such as Mauritania, Senegal, Mali and Niger.

Realizing the importance of the stakes and the insignificance of the bet, Boumedienne set out to work on two fronts:

First, by supporting at the outset Morocco's legitimate claims. For he understood that as long as Spain remained in the region, he would not have the slightest chance to achieve his goals. As it was clear to

him that because of the legitimacy of her claim, Morocco was the only force capable of putting an end to the Spanish presence in the Western Sahara. So he decided to use Morocco and Mauritania as a cat's paw. He consequently agreed to His Majesty, King Hassan II, and President Mokhtarould Daddah, during the Agadir meeting of 1970 to support their claims. This pledge was reiterated during the summit of NOVADIBOU convened in 1973. Furthermore, Boumedienne declared before his peers of the Arab League during the Arab summit of Rabat, convened in 1974, that Algeria had no claim whatever over the Western Sahara and that he personally was prepared to support Morocco and Mauritania politically, diplomatically and even militarily if necessary.

Second, concurrently however, Boumedienne initiated and fostered the dialogue with Spain in general terms and with the ruling authorities of the Western Sahara in specific terms. He proposed, among other things, to drop his support to and even stifle the Liberation movement of the Canari Island if Spain favored the Algerian approach to the problem of the Western Sahara. Ultimately, the movement was definitely silenced and Algerian troops were authorized to occupy the eastern part of the Western Sahara. This was to lead to the battle of Amgala in February 1976 when dozens of Algerian enlisted and officers were taken prisoners by the Moroccans.

The election of Chadli Ben Jedid as the third President of socialist and popular Algerian Republic in 1979, gave birth to new hopes. Moroccans and many Algerians, along with their common friends, expected a new bend in the relations between the two countries. It is believed that because of his wealth, and especially his profound religious faith, Ben Jedid regarded Boumedienne's leftist socialism as a whim bound to be overcome.

The expected change has not yet, however, taken place despite the summit meeting of 26 February 1983 at the border and the shy efforts towards normalization. Many excuse Pt Ben Jedid for not taking hasty decisions. His supporters argue that having inherited a complex and delicate situation, it would be difficult for him to make a sharp turn without incurring leftist national and international criticism and distrust.

It is, however, essential, for the benefit of the two peoples, that President Ben Jedid correct the wrong his predecessor has done. For the matter, the ball is on his side of the court. Morocco having agreed to the referendum the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) so badly wanted to promote, Algeria should refrain from giving POLISARIO unlimited support and forgo the idea that the Western Sahara should be unconditionally handed back to her surrogates.

We hope that reason and good will shall prevail, and that President Ben Jedid will find a way out of this dilemma no one enjoys. If he does, history will give him credit. But if he fails, his conscience will smart under general popular opprobrium should this eventually drive the two countries into a conflict of the Iran/Iraq type.

MOROCCAN LOST TERRITORIES AND THE MYTH OF THE SAHARAWI PEOPLE

Now and then, ignoring the history of the Kingdom of Morocco, without any serious attempt to get to the core of the matter, some reporters only concerned about selling their articles have at times asked the question: Why should Morocco trade butter for cannons in the pursuit of a cause that serves the ugly face of expansionism at the expenses of the poor Saharawi people? These reporters, writers or whatever they consider themselves to be should know that as early as 1908,

political and religious leaders urged His Majesty, King Moulay Abdelhafid to engage in recovering the Moroccan lost territories. That proves that recent and future demands were, and will be--not new. Who could possibly imagine that Morocco was then trying to recover territories that did not belong to her, when what was left of the country was running the risk of being dismembered or militarily occupied. The truth is that in addition to Ceuta and Mellila, Morocco lost between 1845 and 1900 a long list of territories.⁵ No historian except Germain Ayache has ever mentioned that in 1845 France, in Algeria since 1830, confirmed the annexation of Moroccan tribes through the treaty delineating the boundaries with the old Turkish possession. Furthermore, in 1900, France incorporated into the Algerian territory the Moroccan oases of Saoura, Gourara, Touat, Tidikit, the valley of the three oueds of Saoura, Guir and Zousfana as well as the oued Draa stretches and Tindouf. These were the territories Morocco wanted to recover in 1908, the equivalent of an area larger than Switzerland, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg together.

In 1956, after the independence, Morocco did not want to settle the border dispute with the French, for the Algerian leaders made the pledge to solve the problem amicably as soon as France was out of Algeria. Thus, Morocco turned her full attention to the recovery of the territories under Spanish rule. The vast and intensive diplomatic campaign conducted by Morocco, climaxed in the Green March. The Moroccans were and still are very proud and moved by the peaceful triumph which removed one of the ugliest colonial stains in Africa. But they can hardly contain their resentment against those Algerian brothers they so spontaneously and so generously helped in times of need and who are now so ungratefully contesting their legitimate claim.

Those accusing Morocco of expansionism would soon change their minds if they did not mind looking into some historical facts. For the matter, they should consult the map of Morocco published over the years by the encyclopedia Larousse, known and respected all over the world for its objectivity and unbiased authority. If they did so, they would notice that far from expanding, Morocco has in fact shrunk dramatically since the establishment of the French and Spanish protectorates. In that respect the Larousse Grand Dictionary described the empire of Morocco in 1880 as having an area of 812,000 square kilometers. In 1900, the New Illustrated recorded it as being only 800,000 km.² After Morocco recovered her territories from France and Spain to include Tangier in 1956, the area of the Kingdom was only 430,180 km.² After the recovery of the Tarfia Strip and Sidi Ifni in 1958 and 1969 respectively, the area grew to 458,730 km.² Finally after the recovery of the Jaquia el Mamra in 1979, the total area of the Kingdom is 703,030 km,² that is 109,270 km² less than it was 80 years ago. If that is what is meant by expansionism, then it would be right to refer to it as a shrinking expansionism.

THE SAHARAWI PEOPLE

A people is too far a complex and important thing to hide up ones sleeve so easily. A people distinguishes itself from other peoples by its characteristics and peculiarities, by its language, its struggle for better life or for survival. Until 1912, when a Moroccan merchant passed the Tarfia province, heading south for a long journey he had neither a border to cross or a passport to show. He had no identification or license to produce. He had no duty to pay and no money to change. When he stopped for the night, he would meet other merchants who spoke his

language coming from Chinghit, Atar and going north to Tiznit, Tafraout, Marrakech and Essaouira. After the prayer, they would talk apprehensively about the French colonial swift penetration in Algeria, Senegal and Niger. So would the merchants trip unwind whether through the interior oases or along the coast.⁶

Now where was this Saharawi nation hiding, where were its frontiers, its civilization, its sphere of influence? Although in a position to know better, the Spanish never discovered the Saharawi people. Had they, they would have quite certainly raised the issue of its existence and would have challenged Morocco's right to move in the area. Instead, the only argument they had to offer was that at the time of its colonization in 1884, the Western Sahara was Terra Nullius. This argument was, as we know, ruled out by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion as stated before.

Furthermore, when a people refuses to submit to external authority, the resulting struggle does not go unnoticed.

The world community had not been unmoved and unconcerned by the struggle of the Greeks against the Turks, the Kurds against the Iraqis, the Irish against the British, the Basques against the Spanish, and more recently the Khmeres Roupes against the Vietnamese. If the Saharawi people had any dispute with some other power, this could in no way have gone unnoticed. Chroniclers would have passed no opportunity to give it lip service because these are subjects chroniclers most cherish. Moreover, except Spain, what oppressor or what exploiter were the Saharawi supposed to have rebelled against? The Sultan could not have taken much in terms of taxes from the limited resources they had available in their oases. Although it has been said that the Sultan was paying soldiers

for collecting taxes and that the soldiers collected taxes in order to get paid. This idea of levying taxes with highly viable means of control is quite a fundamental part of the state as developed in Europe. Now that it is clear that Morocco has never considered the Western Sahara as a source of revenue, it is worth mentioning that Morocco views it as a link with subtropical Africa.

The goal of Morocco after its independence in 1956 was and still is to flourish and not just survive. The prerequisite for the moral and material well being is to keep open for free use the communication lines with the outer world by recovering Ceuta and Mellita in the north and the Western Sahara in the south.

Morocco has in this case based her political action on solid facts that history has made available and which the United Nations (UN) reaffirmed through the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 15 October 1975. The Moroccan position in the Western Sahara issue is not the privilege of just one faction, or one party. It is, rather, generated and sustained by the comprehensive, profound and legitimate claim of the people, the government and the nation as a whole.

THE FOREBODING SHADOW OF THE SOVIET UNION

Where does communism stand at the dawn of 1984? Is this triumphant revolution which promised to submerge the world still on its offensive drive? Or is it nothing more than a movement of ideas, a technique of government which has crossed its highwater mark and is now on the way down to its nadir? Where one stands regarding communism and what one thinks of it are the two dominant questions of the last sixty years.⁷

By dozens of millions, men and women were passionately for or violently against it. But those who do not wear the blinkers of the militant and have no obligation to the party (communism) will have no difficulty, if not blinded by the hatred of "anti-communism," finding out where communism is heading 65 years after its birth in Russia.

The future and prosperity of communism, if any, lie in the southern hemisphere. Communism is thus to be referred to as a river flowing toward the sea, heading south for better prospects and more hospitable shores. In its early stage, communism descended from northern to southern Europe. It is in Portugal, Spain, France and Italy that Leninism has found its way to the minds of the most willing disciples. Using Lenin-grad as a starting point, communism conquered China, North Korea and North Vietnam. Hong Kong and Indonesia made a narrow escape. In 1975, using Hanoi as a springboard, the Communists overran south Vietnam. Then in a swift move, they extended their domination over Cambodia and Laos, reaching the Indian Ocean by the end of 1975.

Communist conquests in the Near East, Africa and Latin America may be considered to be of only marginal significance and only and mainly windfalls of opportunity. The most significant acquisition is Cuba, the most recent but not completely consolidated is Afghanistan where Barbak Karmal is endeavoring to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat over a country without a proletariat.

But let us go back to our theory of communism's descent to the south. Many would argue that this is quite normal. Being the doctrine of universal liberation, communism is gradually spreading in order to subdue step by step and one after the other all the peoples of our planet. This would be, however, a misleading argument. For the truth is that in the north, communism did not expand and is not likely to do

so. It rather shrinks. Communist experience did not thrive in Finland which lives in the lap of the Soviet Union, nor did it succeed in the Federal Republic of Germany where, according to Marx and Lenin, communism should have triumphed as early as the 1920s. Austria, Great Britain, Holland, the US and Japan did not follow the example of China in welcoming communism. Between 1920 and 1955 communism was regarded as a real hope for a change. But in the late 1950s, however, it ceased to be irresistibly attractive. The denunciation of the crimes committed by Stalin, the repression of the Hungarian revolt and the Chinese split were the chief reasons that slowed down communist expansion. The unexpected success of capitalism in Asia, particularly in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and Malaysia eventually convinced the world of the failure of Marxist/Leninist theory.

This far flung and needy southern hemisphere is and will remain open to communist influence. Therefore, for the vast majority of the peoples under the yoke of dictatorship and corruption, communism represents an appealing alternative, a means to seize power and hope for the best.

This should not, however, prevent us from taking communist expansion seriously. For Soviet theorists have certainly not given up all hopes to extend communism to Western Europe. They certainly have not forgotten Lenin's augury: "When its encirclement from the south through Africa is completed, Europe will fall under its own weight like a ripe fruit." And it is well known that the Soviet leaders have the same mind-set, that they are very patient and pass no occasion to grasp any opportunity even if it is bound to bring them only a few feet closer to their objective.

Today we notice with dismay that their patience and steadfastness is paying off. The coastline of the African continent is strung with states under Soviet influence and acting as its surrogates. Libya fell to Soviet influence in the early 1970s. In the mid 1970s Angola and Ethiopia took allegiance to Moscow. These three states were to be joined in the Soviet sphere of influence by Mozambique and Madagascar where, according to the French weekly, Le Point, over 200 soviet senior naval officers are fitting out the naval base of Diego Suazez in the northern tip of the island for future use by the Soviet navy. The militancy of Congo, Braggaville, Benin and Algeria in support of Soviet regional and international policy is noteworthy.

Where does Morocco fit in this puzzle? As stated before, Morocco enjoys a most significant geostrategic position at the crossroad of two continents and two water bodies. Since 1974, the position of Morocco ought to have become more significant in terms of Western security, after the communist oriented Portugese Socialist party came to power in Lisbon after the overthrow of Salazar. We still remember the dismay and agitation of the NATO members when they realized with fear and apprehension that the southwestern flank of the alliance was held by a pro-communist government. The decision to expel Portugal from NATO was reached but never implemented; the most optimistic members of the alliance hoping for the best tempered those who wanted to take drastic measures. The threat against the Strait of Gibraltar materialized even more forebodingly after the death of Generalissimo Franco in October 1975. The subsequent popular unrest, the two unsuccessful military coups, the Basque problem and the power takeover by the POSE, the Spanish workers' socialist party, concurred to obscure the future of that critical waterway. While the question whether or not the Iberia

peninsula is going, in the long term, to fly the red flag cannot presently be possibly answered, Morocco stands firm in her visceral and irreversible opposition to communism. Morocco's position in the matter is best described by His Majesty, King Hassan II, "We have always told President Breznev that he should not waste his time as we should not waste ours. He will never become a Moslem just as we will never become a communist." February 1979.

Moscow's message to Morocco, although indirect, is clear. Hundreds of Moroccans have been, during the last eight years, dying through Soviet arms lavishly and graciously supplied by the Libyans and Algerians. Morocco is in fact considered to be the stumbling block in Moscow's strategy of encirclement of Europe from the south, with the final objective of dislocating the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This strategy which was devised by Lenin is most likely to be achieved by:

1. Scaring away Germany by building up her fear of physical annihilation in the event of nuclear exchange in Europe. In this respect, Moscow has presently achieved only moderate success, but the slogan "better red than dead" is spreading rapidly all over Europe. The pacifist movements, although presently insignificant, are likely to gain more support and have a larger audience.

2. Making Western Europe, partly or entirely, dependent on the Soviet Union for its vital supplies. The first step has, in matter of fact, already been achieved in that the European community will be, in the near future, made to be dependent on the Soviet Union for 30% of its natural gas needs. The second step is likely to be achieved in a long

term time frame, when Moscow will be in the position to effectively control African strategic and vital raw materials.

3. Controlling United States lines of communications with Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Gulf. In this matter, the threat is shaping up. Soviet influence and Soviet bases in the Democratic Republic of Yemen, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Madagascar, Angola, Algeria and Libya constitute assets in the hands of Moscow, which are not to be ignored, even at this early and apparently innocent stage.

The rationale behind Soviet involvement in the Western Sahara stems from Morocco's position in the triple fields of politics, economics and geostrategy.

Politically, Morocco is unmistakably committed to the West. Nothing can better express this commitment than the following quotation.

No, I don't have the feeling that they (the Americans) have let me down. But I often make this comparison. On the one hand they have the clan and on the other side we have the club. The members of the clan stick together until death. In the club, members wear a club tie, meet in the evening, read the newspaper, smoke a cigar after dinner, speak about current affairs, then go away. My club is the West. On the other side it's a clan.

His Majesty, King Hassan II.

Economically, Morocco has 75% of the world's proven phosphate rocks reserves, the Western Sahara's excluded. Far more than its worth as a fertilizer, the strategic significance of this natural wealth lies in the fact that every short ton of rocks contains about 200 grams of uranium.

Strategically, Morocco lies at the crossroads of two continents and two bodies of water just across the Strait of Gibraltar, one of the most significant waterways in the world and which constitutes, for large size ships, the only access to the Mediterranean. And one of Moscow's dearest

dreams is quite certainly to be able some time to control the Strait in order to stifle the Mediterranean ports of Europe, Asia and Africa. Besides, Morocco has more than 3500 km of sea coast out of which over 2500 km are on the Atlantic. In addition to its halieutic wealth, one of the richest in the world, the Moroccan west coast enables sea power projection from numerous well equipped and in steep waters sea ports.

Undoubtedly, Morocco is at the forefront of Western struggle against communist expansion. In cooperation with her Western allies, she sent forces to Zaire on three occasions in 1960, 1977 and 1978 in support of a friendly country in need. By voting with the Western block, particularly against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Morocco has chosen her camp. Consequently, the Western powers must underwrite Morocco's ability and willingness to prevail in the common effort to resist communist expansion by contributing substantial and unconditional political and material support.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we may say that there are two approaches to the problem; one military, the other political.

A. The military solution: So long as the POLISARIO is militarily, economically and diplomatically backed by Algeria and Libya, there will be no easy military solution.

In fact, the shortest way to a military solution would logically be to storm the POLISARIO sanctuary in Tindouf, dismantle its bases and free the Sahrawi refugees who are being detained against their will. Such a course of action is not, however, likely to be considered. For Morocco is neither morally nor materially prepared for similar actions.

In addition, such an undertaking would quite certainly trigger a direct confrontation with Algeria. In view of national exhaustion, human suffering and mass destruction the Irano-Iraqi conflict has led to on both sides, no wise person would ever consider anathemizing the peoples of the Maghreb.

B. Political solution: After a period of reflection and legitimate hesitation, His Majesty, King Hassan II eventually agreed in June 1981 in Nairobi to organize a referendum in the Western Sahara as requested by the UN and the OAU. Since then, many organizations and individuals, impatient and critical but ignoring the facts have accused Morocco of dilatory tactics, inconsistency and even of deliberately going back on its word. The truth, however, is that no consensus had been achieved as to which population the referendum should apply to.

Over the years the Algerians, under the leadership of Boumedienne had claimed 500,000 refugees in the Tindouf area. The International Red Cross Committee (IRCC) has repeatedly offered its services to help sort out the refugees and determine who is Sahrawi and who is not. But Algeria has and still is refusing IRCC authorities access to the refugee camps. Although the present Algerian claim of only 100,000 refugees is five times less than it used to be five years ago, the figure is far over that of 74,000 equivalent to the total Sahrawi population according to the Spanish official census of 1974.

The present Sahrawi population as determined by the Moroccan general census of 1982, is about 72,000, not to include those who moved north. If we assume a birth rate of 3% and a death rate of 1%, the population increases between 1976 and 1982 should be about 12,000. In 1982 the total population of 1974 would have grown into 74,000 plus 12,000—that is 86,000. If we subtract from this figure the 72,000

living presently in the Western Sahara, we would come up with at best 14,000 missing from the total. From these 14,000 we should subtract those killed and those missing in action. The final figure of 5000 to 9000 would be the number of refugees living in the camps of Tindouf along with tens of thousands of others from the Sahel area, which the drought forced in 1974 to move north and which Boumedienne used against Morocco. Producing and introducing them to the international press agents as Sahrawis and using them as a reservoir for his recruitment purposes in his undeclared war of attrition against Morocco.

In short, the prerequisites for a referendum in the Western Sahara would be:

1. To determine the number of those who have the right to vote, starting out from the 74,000 figure of the Spanish census of 1974.
2. Allow the refugees to return to their homes in the Western Sahara where the referendum would be organized under the auspices of the UN and the OAU.

If, however, the POLISARIO and its backers are afraid of the outcome of the referendum as it seems to be, then it would be wise to consider another approach which would reconcile the contenders. Since Tindouf was and still is considered to be Moroccan, and since the Algerians are reluctant to give it back to Morocco, it would be beneficial to all parties if the antagonist decided to hand it to the POLISARIO. In addition, many Mauritaniens have, in the years 1978-1979 repeatedly indicated their willingness to give their cousins of the POLISARIO a chunk of land in the northern part of Mauritania. This seems, in my opinion, worth consideration for the problem in North West Africa is not a problem of space but rather a problem of understanding and forgiveness.

ENDNOTES

1. Morocco: A Country Study.
2. Ministry of State in charge of Foreign Affairs.
3. United Nations Monthly Chronicle, Vol. II, p. 36.
4. Ibid.
5. French Historian Germain Ayach.
6. Ibid.
7. Feune Afrique.

ROYAUME du MAROC

